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ABSTRACT

This manual describes the Turtle Technique which was developed to help children with behavior problems control their own disruptive behavior. The technique differs from other behavior modification techniques in that it is based upon self-control rather than external control of disruptive behavior. The Turtle Technique first teaches the child how to respond when he feels threatened by uncontrollable emotions or external events which make him feel like lashing out. The learning of the turtle-like withdrawing response is then followed by relaxation training, generalization training and problem solving. Suggestions for maintenance of this system of self-control and other possible applications of it are provided in the concluding section. (SJL)

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TURTLE MANUAL

by Marlene Schneider
and
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Turtle Manual

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Preface

This is a manual about the Turtle Technique, a technique developed to help children control their own disruptive behavior. Our goal in writing this manual is to teach you how to use the Turtle Technique with your special class. The program can be modified also for use with regular classrooms and individual children. We have organized the manual into several short sections to make it easier to understand. At the beginning of each section you will find a list of objectives, statements of what we hope you will get out of the section. We recommend that you approach the manual one section at a time, not trying to read too much at one sitting. Read the objectives before reading the section. Then read the section. We recommend this procedure so that you become thoroughly familiar with the Turtle Technique before trying to implement it. We have found that if one proceeds through the manual in this fashion, one is likely to retain the information needed for implementation.

Complete the entire manual before starting to use the technique. You will find the outline of the manual which follows helpful in summarizing the major aspects of the technique. If you wish more background information regarding various aspects of the technique, consult the references given at the end of the manual.

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I. Introduction

A. Objectives

We would like to give you the rationale behind the use of the Turtle Technique in this section. In particular, after you have read this section we would like you to be able to state:

1. How self-control techniques are superior to external control techniques.
2. What the three parts of the Turtle Techniques are.
3. Why analogies such as the turtle are appropriate for this self-control technique. What other analogies are useful.
4. For whom the Turtle Technique is appropriate.
5. How the Turtle Technique breaks the cycle of disruptive behavior.
6. How the Turtle Technique influences the child's self-esteem and why.

B. Superiority of self-control

What can we do for the child who lacks the ability to cope with failure, who out of frustration throws temper tantrums, hits others, calls them names, teases them, who suffers unnecessarily from his inability to control his impulses? What can we do, moreover, to stop the children he victimizes from responding to his antics with the attention he craves?

Behavior modification has developed a number of techniques to deal with these problems. These techniques typically consist of systematic use of rewards and punishments presented to the child contingent upon his behavior. This manual is about a new technique developed at the Point of Woods School, a laboratory school for children with behavioral problems at the State University of New York at Stony Brook. This new technique, the Turtle Technique, differs from other behavior modification techniques because it is based upon "self-control rather than external control of disruptive behavior. You will be teaching your children to control their own disruptive behavior rather than directly controlling their behavior yourself. We feel self-control

is preferable to external control because 1) it is easier for the teacher to administer, 2) it has longer-lasting effects, 3) it is a skill required of people in our society, 4) the child is learning to take responsibility for himself and to be independent, and 5) it teaches them to express and fulfill their needs in appropriate ways.

C. What is "turtle"?

What does the Turtle Technique consist of? It makes use of the analogy of the turtle, which, as we all know, withdraws into its shell when it feels threatened. In the same way, the child is taught to withdraw into his imaginary shell when he feels threatened by uncontrollable emotions or external events which make him feel like lashing out at his environment in an impulsive manner. In practice, we ask the child to respond to the cue word, "turtle," by pulling arms and head in close to his body and closing his eyes. If he is sitting, the response may consist of putting his head down on the desk and pulling his arms and hands in close to his body. Second, after the child has learned the turtle response, he is taught to relax his muscles while doing turtle. The relaxation is physiologically incompatible with the level of muscle tension necessary for engaging in most disruptive/aggressive behavior and decreases the probability of occurrence of such behavior. Third, the child is taught to use problem-solving techniques to evaluate alternative choices for dealing with the situation which led him to do turtle. You can teach the 3-part sequence of turtle-relaxation-problem solving through the use of group discussion, story telling, modeling, role-playing, and direct reinforcement. The children will be instructed in each step of the Turtle Technique until they have mastered that step; then you will progress to the next step. In this manner, step by step, you will insure that all the children acquire the procedure.

D. About expression of feelings

The Turtle Technique can help children learn to express their feelings. When a child impulsively lashes out at his environment, he may be expressing raw emotion, but the consequences of his display of feeling may be negative for him and for others. Through the Turtle Technique we teach the child to channel his expression of emotions in appropriate ways; instead of lashing out, the child learns to define his needs (i.e., for affection, attention, easier work, a pencil, etc.) and to seek the satisfaction of these needs with a prosocial expression of emotion. In essence, we try to teach the distinction between assertion and aggression.

E. For whom is turtle appropriate?

The Turtle Technique is appropriate for young elementary school children with behavior problems. We have found that for grades kindergarten through second grade the image of a turtle is effective. For third and higher grades, the children may not respond well to the turtle image and other "more mature" images are desirable. (For example, "huddle" from football, or just "stop." The one word "stop" along with a modified version of the turtle response has been used successfully with adults.) The important point is how an image is used, not what the image is. Any vivid image can serve as the basis for the type of self-control response sequence described in this manual.

F. The nature of disruptive behavior

Before describing how to teach turtle, we would like to talk a little about disruptive behavior in general. In the classroom, most inappropriate behavior takes the form of fighting, hitting, calling out, teasing, taking others' property, throwing tantrums, and not attending to the teacher. Children do not engage in disruptive behavior in a vacuum. They act inappropriately because there is a reward for doing so. Typically, their peers pay attention to them for being disruptive, and this serves as a rewarding consequence. Sometimes you may have also noticed that when you reprimand

a disruptive child, he seems to enjoy the attention; in some cases your own attention may be a reward for his disruptive behavior. Now behavior modifiers have learned from hundreds of studies with children of all ages that rewards increase the frequency of behavior. It is not at all surprising, therefore, that children increase their rates of disruptive classroom behavior when their peers and even the teacher inadvertently reward disruptive behavior with attention.

G. How turtle teaches prosocial behavior

In order to break this endless cycle, we have to change events within the classroom so that the teacher and the peers reward appropriate behavior and ignore disruptive behavior. The Turtle Technique facilitates this change: peers will learn to do turtle instead of attending to another's disruption; the disruptive child will not receive the attention he previously had for his inappropriate behavior. Furthermore, social pressure from teacher and peers will develop for the disruptive child himself to do turtle instead of his inappropriate behavior. Relaxation will provide an alternative method for the child to reduce frustrations and defuse strong emotions rather than resorting to disruptive behavior. The problem-solving technique will teach the children how to cope with frustrations and fill their needs in a socially acceptable and realistic manner. At the point where the children have learned to use either an external provocation or an internal feeling of anger as a cue for turtle, relaxation, and problem-solving, they will have mastered the self-control techniques and will rarely engage in disruptions.

H. Effects of turtle on self-esteem

The mastery of a self-control technique will also bolster the children's self-esteem for several reasons: first, they have learned to control their own behavior rather than having an external agent control their behavior for them, as is usually the case with young children; second, they no longer will perceive themselves as "bad" and will receive more positive feedback from the teacher; third, they will

feel more grown up because they are using problem-solving instead of giving in to their impulses.

II. Definition of Behavior

A. Objectives

After reading the following section you should be able to:

1. State how to define a target behavior.
2. Define actual target behaviors you could deal with using turtle.
3. Discriminate adequately-defined from inadequately-defined target behavior.

B. Specification of observable behavior

The first step in teaching turtle is to define specifically what the disruptive target behaviors are for which you would like to see your children use turtle. It is important to define the target behaviors so that they are easily observable; you should have no problem distinguishing the target behaviors from other things the children do. We can't overemphasize the importance of a careful selection and definition of target behaviors. For example, let's assume the problem in your class is fighting. Fighting is a broad category including punching with or without provocation, hitting in response to teasing, playful tapping, kicking, accidentally bumping another child, intentionally bumping another child, etc. You have to decide how you want to define fighting for the purposes of teaching turtle. One adequate definition might be that fighting consists of punching and kicking but not accidental bumping. Another might include accidental bumping as well as punching and kicking. The two are equally valid. You have to make this type of decision before introducing turtle and you must then <u>consistently</u> stick with your definition. You may decide to select a few behaviors; this is all right as long as you define each. The important criterion to keep in mind when defining the disruptive behavior is, "What does the child do?" We recommend that you write down your definition of your target behaviors for

future reference. Feel free to consult the Point of Woods staff if you are having difficulties defining the target behaviors. For the sake of this exposition, we will select the following three target behaviors: (1) hitting another child with or without provocation; (2) teasing another child verbally; and (3) grabbing another child's property without asking his or the teacher's permission.

III. Taking a Baseline

A. Objectives

After reading the following section you should be able to state:

1. What a baseline is.
2. How to prepare data paper for taking a baseline.
3. When to record and what to record.
4. How to treat teachers' and children's reports of target behavior.
5. How long to take a baseline.
6. What to do with the data at the end of the week.
7. How to decide whether to start introducing turtle at the end of the baseline.
8. Why it is important to record the number of target behaviors.

B. Recording behavior

After defining target behaviors, the second step is to determine how often the target behaviors occur. We call this procedure taking a baseline or determining the base-rate frequency of the target behavior.

Take a large sheet of paper and rule off rows for each problem child in the class. Rule off columns for each day of the week. You should end up with five boxes per child per week. See next page for a sample sheet. As you go about your normal classroom routine, every time someone emits the target behavior, place a check in the appropriate box for his name and the day of the week. Don't do anything

Record of Fighting

Mrs. Smith
First Grade

Child's Name	Monday 11/1	Tuesday 11/2	Wednesday 11/3	Thursday 11/4	Friday 11/5
Bill Jones					
Mary Ames					
Robin Praver					
Rita Black					
Joe Roth					
Robert Hallman					
etc.					
TOTALS					

differently or introduce turtle while you are taking the baseline. Make sure to record every instance of the target behavior that you observe; if instances of target behaviors that you haven't observed yourself are reported to you by children or other teachers, you have to develop a consistent policy for how to treat them. We recommend that you treat other teachers' reports as if you had observed the behavior yourself, but that you record children's reports separately. Use a "✓" for direct observations of target behaviors or teachers' reports, and a "Ⓥ" for children's reports. Continue baseline observations for at least one week before introducing the technique.

C. Importance of recording

Unless you have reliable records of the average number of target behaviors normally occurring in your class, it may be difficult to judge whether or not an improvement occurs after you teach turtle. Thus, there is good reason to spend a full week on baseline. It is true that you may notice a subjective change in your class mood after introducing turtle, but if the change is subtle, you may not even notice this. Also, if other teachers and administrators ask to see evidence of the program's effectiveness, your word of mouth isn't nearly as convincing as numerical data.

D. Evaluating the baseline

At the end of the baseline week, total the number of target behaviors across all the children for each day. You should have five totals, one for each day. Update the totals each week throughout all phases of turtle training.

Examine your data carefully. If more than ten instances of the target behavior are occurring per day across the entire class, we recommend that you start to introduce turtle. If fewer than ten instances per day are occurring, it may not be worth the effort to teach the entire class turtle. It is probably better to work out an individualized program for the children who are having a particulary difficult time controlling impulsive aggression.

IV. Introducing Turtle--The First Week

A. Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to state:

1. For how long and when to have turtle practice;
2. The three stages for teaching the turtle response itself (describe each stage);
3. How you teach the class to rapidly assume the turtle position in response to the command, "turtle;"
4. When to praise the children and why praise is important in teaching turtle;
5. How you get the other children in the class to support the child doing turtle;
6. What to do if the children do not respond to praise as a reward;
7. What to do during turtle practice for the remainder of the first week after the first day;
8. What to do outside of turtle practice the first week;
9. Which turtle responses are inappropriate and what to do about inappropriate turtles at this stage of training;
10. How to decide to move on to the next stage at the end of the week.

B. Overview

In order to introduce the Turtle Technique, you need to set aside some class time. You will teach turtle in two settings: planned practice periods and normal classroom periods. Set aside a 15 minute block of time each day for planned practice. It is preferable that the practice period be at the same time each day; we have found it convenient to schedule turtle practice as a midmorning break between academic activities. By the afternoon the class usually becomes too restless for turtle practice.

The first part of the turtle-relaxation-problem-solving sequence is the turtle response itself. This response is taught in three stages, which we will illustrate with the targets of hitting, teasing, and grabbing. The stages are 1) the initial story, 2) group practice, and 3) individual practice.

C. The initial story

For the first practice session allow more than 15 minutes. At this session introduce the technique to the children with some variation of the following story, which is the initial phase of the technique.

> Once upon a time there was a handsome young turtle. He was six (five, seven, etc.) years old, and he had just started first grade (kindergarten, second grade, etc.). His name was Little Turtle. Little Turtle was very upset about going to school. He preferred to be at home with his baby brother and his mother. He didn't want to learn school things; he wanted to run outside and play with his friends, or color in his coloring book. It was too hard to try to write letters or copy from the board. He wanted to play and giggle with friends--he even loved to fight with them. He didn't want to share. He liked to tease the other kids and grab their nice toys. He didn't like listening to his teacher or having to stop making those wonderful loud fire engine noises he used to make with his mouth. It was too hard to remember not to fight or make noise. And it was just too hard not getting mad at all the things that made him mad.
>
> Every day on his way to school he would say to himself that he would try his best not to get in trouble that day. But despite that, every day he would get mad at somebody and fight, or someone would make him angry and he would hit. He couldn't help taking any toys he liked from his friends and he loved to tease those smart kids. So he always would get into trouble, and after a few weeks he just hated school. He began to feel like a "bad" turtle. He went around for a long time feeling very, very bad.

One day when he was feeling his worst, he met the biggest and oldest tortoise in his town. He was a wise old turtle, who was 200 years old and as big as a house. Little Turtle spoke to him in a very timid voice because he was very afraid of the enormous tortoise. But the old tortoise was as kind as he was big and was very eager to help him. "Hey there," he said in his big bellowing voice, "I'll tell you a secret. Don't you realize you are carrying the answer to your problems around with you?" Little Turtle didn't know what he was talking about. "Your shell--your shell," he bellowed. "That's why you have a shell." You can hide in your shell whenever you get that feeling inside you that tells you you are angry and want to fight. When you are in your shell, you can have a moment to rest, until you don't feel angry any more. So next time you get angry, just go into your shell." Little Turtle liked the idea, and he was very eager to try his new secret in school. The next day came and he was doing his work in school. Suddenly, the boy next to him accidentally bumped him on the back. He started to feel that angry feeling again, and was about to lose his temper and punch that boy, when he suddenly remembered what the old tortoise had said. He pulled in his arms, legs, and head, quick as a wink, and rested until he didn't feel angry any more. He was delighted to find it so nice and comfortable in his shell where no one could bother him. When he came out, he was surprised to find his teacher smiling at him. She said she was very proud of him! He continued using his secret for the rest of the year. Whenever anyone hit him, he used it; whenever he wanted to hit anyone else, he used it; whenever someone teased him or he wanted to tease someone else, he used it. When he got his report card, it was

the best in the whole class. Everyone admired him and wondered what his magic secret was.

D. Group practice

After telling the story, move on to phase two, group practice. Demonstrate the turtle response to the entire class and ask them to imitate it. Sit in front of the class and say to them something like, "Oh, I feel so angry that Johnny hit me, but I will be strong and do turtle." Pull your arms and legs in close to your body, put your head down so that your chin rests on your chest, and say, "Turtle." Pause. "It is so much nicer to be in my shell than to get yelled at for hitting Johnny." Ask the class to imangine similar scenes and do turtle; repeat the sequence five to ten times. Make sure to use the word, "turtle," as the cue for them to emit the response. In fact, it is important to instruct them to do turtle whenever you give the command, "Turtle." You can shape up a quick response to your command by playing a game: tell the children that you are going to turn your back for several seconds, but as soon as you turn around and say, "Turtle," they must do turtle. Reward them immediately after they do turtle.

E. Individual practice

Continue to phase three, individual practice, Go around the class and ask each individual child to practice the technique in response to various imaginary frustrating situations where they would ordinarily emit the target behavior. Praise the class and each child lavishly for a good performance <u>immediately</u> after they emit the turtle response. <u>Immediate</u> praise is very important in this early stage of practice. Instruct the class to clap their hands in applause for each individual child as he performs the turtle

response; this group applause is the first step in generating a community feeling for the technique and getting peer support for individual children's turtle responses.

F. Peer support

We can't overemphasize the importance of encouraging the class to clap (support) when a child performs the turtle response. Such peer support helps maintain the child's new efforts in self-control. Now instead of getting attention from his peers for his impulsive disruptive behaviors, he will be getting peer approval and attention for controlling himself. If a child receives little support from his classmates for doing turtle, he may not feel that his new-found efforts are accepted, and he may in fact perceive turtle as useless; only through the development of a mutual sense of community around turtle will the individual child be willing to risk doing turtle with the expectation that his new self-control will be accepted by his peers. Praise children for supporting the turtle response as much as for doing it themselves.

G. Rewards

We are suggesting that you use praise as a reward for turtle responses. We have found that with particularly disruptive children praise is sometimes not a strong enough reward. In those cases we often go to edibles such as small pieces of candy as rewards. The teacher will grab a handful of candies during turtle practice and walk around the room dispensing them for correct turtle responses. Do not hesitate to use such stronger rewards if your children aren't responding to praise. But remember to give the rewards immediately after the child performs the turtle response; even a short delay can be detrimental. Henceforth, whenever we refer to "praise" in the manual, you can assume that you could substitute stronger rewards as necessary.

H. Group practice after the first day

Repeat the above practice routine every day for one week. Over the course of the week, use different stories each day. Make up stories about frustrating situations related to the

target behaviors, or use actual incidents as the basis for the stories. Tell these stories to the class and outline how they could use turtle instead of fighting, teasing, or grabbing property in these situations. Describe the situation yourself, model turtle responses to it, and have the class imitate you. Practice calling out turtle and rewarding the children for a rapid response.

I. Outside of group practice activities

Throughout this first week of turtle practice, you should do several things outside of the practice session. First, continue to record the number of target behaviors. Second, praise all turtles done during non-practice periods and urge other children also to praise each other for these turtle responses. Don't forget to reward the peers who support the children using turtle. These steps are crucial! If children go unrewarded for good turtles, they will not use the technique. It is worth your while even to stop your ongoing class activity to praise a child for turtle. Third, urge the children to use turtle for the target behaviors. Remind the entire class at least five times a day to use turtle. When you see children about to fight, tease, or grab, give them the turtle cue; say, "Turtle," and remind them to do turtle. Praise them, of course, if they follow your suggestion. If any children encourage other children to do turtle or praise other children for having done turtle, reward these children. In order to get children to do turtle, it is important for you to reward them for supporting each other's turtle responses. Fourth, several times throughout the day, give the turtle cue and wait for the class to assume the turtle position. This will prepare them to use the response at any time. Don't forget the immediate reward.

You may notice that a few children use the technique inappropriately at times. For example, a child will often give in to the impulse to hit another child and then do turtle. Two children may make a deal to hit each other so they can do turtle to attract

your attention. Eventually, we will want to teach them to discriminate appropriate from inappropriate occasions for turtle. However, during the first week, we want them to use the technique as much as possible. So praise even inappropriate turtles. We have found that this gets them used to the response and is just a necessary additional step.

At the end of the first week, analyze your records and your reactions. If the children have been doing turtle adequately during the practice sessions, proceed to the next step, outlined below. If this condition is not met, continue the initial steps for several more days.

In this introductory stage, you will probably notice that the turtle response is very dependent upon your giving the cue, i.e., the children do not use it spontaneously. This is to be expected and will be modified later. If it happens, however, that your children do start doing turtle spontaneously outside of practice the first week, you are extremely lucky. Be sure to capitalize on your luck and reward them lavishly for their efforts. Sometimes peers tell children about to fight or tantrum to do turtle. This should be especially encouraged as it aids a great deal in the generalization phase of the technique.

As mentioned earlier, images other than turtle may be more appropriate for mature children older than second-grade level. Possibilities include the football huddle, meditation, etc. If you decide to adopt another image, follow the same general sequence of steps outlined in this manual but modify the stories to fit your image. We have purposely centered our manual around one image for the sake of clarity, but other possibilities will certainly prove as effective as the turtle.

V. Introducing Turtle--The Second Week

A. Objectives

After reading the following section you should be able to state:

1. What to do during group turtle practice for the second week.

2. What to do outside of group turtle practice for the second week.
3. How to discriminate appropriate, inappropriate, and questionable turtle responses.
4. Which turtle responses to reward and how to teach the children to discriminate between appropriate and inappropriate occasions for "doing turtle."
5. What the random provocation technique is and how to use it.
6. Why the random provocation technique is important.
7. When to continue to relaxation training.

B. Overview

Throughout the second week of teaching the Turtle Technique, your goal is to solidify the good start you made and bring the children to the point of readiness for relaxation training. You want to help the children discriminate appropriate from inappropriate occasions for performing the turtle response; you also want to increase their spontaneous application of the response outside of group practice periods.

Continue to hold 15 minute daily group practice periods. Also continue to remind children to "do turtle" throughout the school day and reward children immediately after they respond. Finally, continue to encourage and reward peers for supporting each other's use of the Turtle Technique. Now we are ready for the new additions.

C. Discrimination training

By now you may have encountered the situation where the children will be constantly urging each other to "do turtle," knowing that they can receive a reward. You are especially likely to encounter this situation if you use extrinsic rewards such as candy or toys. While some of these occasions for turtle may be appropriate, many are not. We need to teach the children

to discriminate between times to turtle and times not to turtle.

Before we can teach discrimination, we must have a clear definition of appropriate and inappropriate turtle responses. Based on 3 years of experience with the technique, we offer the following definitions:

1. An appropriate turtle response occurs when a child who is the victim of a target behavior such as hitting perpetrated by another child. If the teacher or another child gives a verbal cue to do turtle in a situation where a child is the victim of a target behavior, his turtle response is also appropriate.
2. An inappropriate turtle can occur in three situations: a) When two or more children make a deal with each other to do turtle to get extra rewards. You should observe the bargaining in this situation; b) When a child emits a target behavior such as hitting and then does turtle; c) When a child does turtle merely to get the teacher's attention. The child will typically look to see if the teacher is watching him and then do turtle.
3. A third category of questionable turtles is also defined. It includes those cases where a child spontaneously does turtle for no apparent reason; it is impossible to tell whether or not he is responding to an impulse to do a target behavior or trying to get your attention. If a child starts to emit a target behavior but does turtle in midstream, this is also a questionable turtle.

You should start to teach discrimination by rewarding appropriate and questionable turtles but not inappropriate turtles during the regular class periods. Tell the class the difference between the three types of turtle responses; use stories to bring home to the kids the discrimination during turtle practice. For example, the following story is a possibility: "Johnny grabbed Mary's paper; Mary was very angry and hit Johnny; but then she remembered what the big wise turtle said and went into her shell. Is this a good turtle?"

Be sure to go over the distinction between appropriate, inappropriate, and questionable turtles at least once in each practice period during this week. You can emphasize the difference by asking the kids to role-play or play act instances of each type of turtle. However, the most important rule is to reward the appropriate turtles and ignore the inappropriate ones. Be sure to extend the discrimination to peer support: only reward peers for supporting appropriate turtle responses and ignore peers for supporting inappropriate turtle responses. If you follow this procedure consistently, the children will quickly catch on and cease to use turtle indiscriminantly.

D. Random provocation

As the children discriminate the appropriate occasions for "doing turtle," we want to teach them to use the technique spontaneously without teacher prompting. During the first week, we suggested that you call out, "Turtle," whenever you saw an incipient problem situation developing between two or more kids. Now we want to help the children learn to recognize the situations themselves with less prompting from you. We have found that we can accomplish this goal by using the Random Provocation Technique, which is essentially "bull-baiting."

You can increase the number of opportunities the children have for emitting a rewarded turtle response by programming turtle trials throughout the day. Several times over the course of the day, randomly select a child who is busily engaged in some activity and provoke a target behavior, i.e., go over to Mary's desk and grab her paper, bump into her, etc. She, of course, should do turtle; you then reward her. If she doesn't do turtle, you explain to her that this would have been an appropriate occasion for doing it. Make the rounds provoking several children and rewarding their turtle responses. The children will react with surprise the first time you provoke them, but they will rapidly learn to view your provocations as a cue for turtle. Continue random provocations for several days until all the children respond with turtle. Next, pick a child and ask him to circulate around the room provoking

others to elicit turtle responses. Both you and the provoking child must lavishly praise the target child if he does turtle or correct him if he hits back or emits another target response. Repeat the random provocations by children two times a day for each child. You should keep an eye on the provoker to make sure things don't get out of hand.

In devising this procedure, we were aware of the risks involved, i.e., children could become more disruptive as a function of teacher sanctions for provocations, even if only in certain situations. However, to date, this has not happened in classroom trials of the procedure. It has worked very effectively in the laboratory school with particularly disruptive children. The random provocation procedure is an excellent means of increasing usage of turtle outside of practice periods for several reasons: 1) children gain experience associating the real-life cues for turtle with the turtle response in a setting where rewards can be given for appropriate turtle response, 2) children never know whether a provocation is staged or real, and this uncertainty will increase their chances of emitting a turtle response because they do not want to miss out on any teacher-provided rewards for staged incidents, 3) children can receive peer support when the provoking child praises the target child for responding with turtle. We urge you to try this procedure; we will be glad to advise you and hear from you about any reservations you may have.

E. Deciding to start relaxation training

At the end of the second week, stop to evaluate what has been happening. Examine your records of the target behavior. If your kids are starting to discriminate appropriate from inappropriate turtles, and if you are starting to see some change in the target behavior, you should continue to Relaxation Training. If either of these criteria are not met, you should continue with the second week's activities for several more days.

VI. Relaxation Training

A. Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to state

1. What type of rationale to give the children for relaxation training;
2. What a person must focus on to master the skill of muscle relaxation;
3. How to teach phase one of relaxation training, the tense and release phase;
4. What muscle groups to concentrate on;
5. An example of what you will actually say to the children while asking them to relax;
6. What to do while walking around the room checking on on individual children during phase one;
7. When to move to phase two of relaxation training;
8. How to teach phase two of relaxation training;
9. What the child should be able to do at the conclusion of relaxation training.

B. Rationale for muscle relaxation[1]

The second phase of the Turtle Technique training program involves teaching the children to relax all their muscles while they are emitting the turtle response. During turtle practice introduce relaxation with a rationale along the lines of the following story:

> Little Turtle goes to school every day and withdraws into his shell whenever other kids hit or tease him or grab his paper. The teacher is very happy and gives Little Turtle a good report card. But Little Turtle has angry feelings in his stomach after withdrawing into his shell. He wants to be good and get more good report cards, but the angry feelings tempt him, saying, "Little Turtle, why don't you hit back just once when the teacher isn't watching. That would feel good."
>
> Little Turtle doesn't know what to do. He is very upset. He wants good reports, but those angry feelings

[1]Check to make sure that there are no physical problems (such as some forms of heart disease) that would counterindicate the use of the tensing phase of the relaxation training.

always tempt him to be bad. Then he remembers the wise old tortoise who helped him once before. Right after school, he runs to the tortoise's house at the edge of town. Little Turtle says to the tortoise, "What can I do? I have angry feelings in my stomach after going into my shell. They tell me to hit, but I don't want to get in trouble. What can I do to stop the angry feelings?"

The tortoise, wiser than the wisest turtle in the town, has an answer for Little Turtle. The wise old tortoise scratches his head for a moment, thinks, and then says to Little Turtle, "When you are in your shell, relax. Let go of your muscles and make believe you are going to sleep. Let your hands hang loose. Let your feet relax. Let go of your whole body. The angry feelings will go away. Think about pleasant things, like the taste of a delicious ice cream cone, while you are relaxing. The angry feelings will go away and you will awake without them. I will tell your teacher to help you learn to relax."

Little Turtle likes the idea. The next day he goes to school and tells his teacher what the old tortoise told him. When the boy next to him bumps into Little Turtle, Little Turtle withdraws into his shell and then relaxes. He lets go of all his muscles. Those angry feelings go away and Little Turtle is very happy. He continues to get good report cards. The teacher likes the idea so much that she teaches the entire class to relax. This is how she taught them to relax...

In essence, you are suggesting to the kids that relaxation is a way to reduce any tendency towards the target behavior remaining after they have done the initial turtle response. It is a mechanism for coping with strong negative emotions such as anger by defusing them without engaging in disruptive behavior. It is a technique for <u>rechanneling</u> emotion, not <u>repressing</u> emotion.

Muscle relaxation is a skill learned by repeated practice, like any other skill. In order to become deeply relaxed, we must be able to focus very carefully on the differences between tense and relaxed muscle states. We teach this skill in two phases: first, we practice alternately tensing and releasing the various muscle groups in the body and concentrating on the sensations very carefully; second, once a child can become relaxed in this manner, we ask him to release his muscles without prior tensing. You will go through this progression with your children. You may also find relaxation useful for yourself; it is used very successfully with adults who are anxious about one thing or another.[2]

C. Phase one: Tensing[1] and releasing

For phase one of relaxation training, after telling the introductory story, instruct the children first to tense the muscles of the part of the body being trained and then suddenly to relax it, with your suggestions delivered in a calm and gentle voice that they be aware of how nice that part of the body feels when relaxed. Have them tense and release the following muscles in the following order and manner: make fists to tense the hands; bend the arms back at the elbow towards the shoulder to tense the arms; push the feet against the ground to tense the feet; bend the legs back at the knees to tense the legs; press the lips together firmly, close the eyes tightly and wrinkle the forehead to tense the face; pull the stomach in to tense it; and take a deep breath and hold it to tense the chest. It is extremely important to present relaxation instructions in a slow, quiet, monotonic voice, with few changes in inflection and pitch. A typical sequence of relaxation instructions would go as follows: "I'd like you to make a fist with both hands, that's right, hold it as tight as possible, count to 10 and let go; let go and feel how good it is, how relaxed and nice. Very good. Now again, I'd like you to make a fist with both hands, hold it very tight, count to 10--1, 2, 3, tight, 4, 5, even tighter, 6, 7, 8, as tight as you can, 9, 10. Release; let your fist slowly open. Let go, relax, feel how warm and tingling it is, how nice and relaxed."

[2] In a recent study by Charles Poskewicz systematic desensitizati (relaxation) has been used with classroom teachers to help them cope with classroom problems.

Walk around the room and feel the kids' muscles to make sure that they are really tensing and releasing. Give them feedback and praise and help them to loosen up their muscles. Make absolutely sure they are <u>really tensing</u> their muscles; put your hand on their muscles to check for tension. Only if they really experience the tension will they learn to recognize the contrast between the tensed and relaxed states.

Repeat for several practice sessions. Then integrate turtle and relaxation by asking the class to do turtle; while they are in the turtle position, ask them to tense their entire bodies as you slowly count from 1 to 10, after which they should suddenly relax their whole bodies. Repeat this procedure for two to three practice sessions, again circulating around the room to check that they are loosening up their bodies. A trick for checking a child's level of relaxation is to lift his arm several inches and let it drop to the desk; if it drops like an inanimate object, it is relaxed; if not, help the child to correctly tense and relax until he can achieve this level of looseness in his arm.

D. Phase two: releasing

When you find that most children can loosen up their muscles considerably, continue to phase two of relaxation training. In phase two, you instruct them to let go of their muscles and relax without the tense-release sequence. You again start with the fists and go through a sequence of arms, feet, legs, lips, eyes, forehead, stomach, and chest. For example, you might say, "Relax your arm. Think of how nice and relaxed your arm is. Feel the warm tingling in your arm. See how nice it feels. Let go and become relaxed." Give them strong suggestions of relaxation such as, "I am going to count from 1 to 10; at each count you will be more and more relaxed, like good little turtles." Ask them to imagine pleasant scenes while letting go of their muscles, e.g., "Imagine that you are eating a delicious ice cream cone." Researchers have found that imagining pleasant scenes enhances relaxation in children. Tell them to be aware of how safe and comfortable it feels.

Relaxation training should take from one to two weeks to complete. You have to use your subjective judgment as to how loose the children's muscles are getting to decide when to advance through the stages of relaxation and when to advance beyond relaxation. At the conclusion of relaxation training, the children should be able to do the turtle response and rapidly assume a highly relaxed position.

Throughout relaxation training, continue recording the number of target responses.

VII. Generalization Training

A. Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to state:

1. The purpose of generalization training;
2. What type of reward system to introduce;
3. How to strengthen peer involvement;
4. Why peer involvement is so important at this stage.

B. Overview

By this point in the training sequence, the children know how and when to emit the turtle response; they are experts at executing the response during practice and at other times when the cue is given but probably only use it occasionally on their own during the rest of the day, which is, after all, when we want them to use it. The purpose of generalization training is to teach the children to generalize from practice to non-practice settings, i.e., to increase their use of the turtle-relaxation on their own initiative under appropriate circumstances.

In our earlier discussion of disruptive behavior, we hypothesized that children hit, tease, and engage in various inappropriate behaviors in order to gain attention from peers and teachers; attention is one reward maintaining disruptive behavior. One purpose of the Turtle Technique is to supply the children with a constructive alternative response to disruptions which can also elicit peer and teacher attention. You have now taught your children the alternative response. We

now have to arrange the classroom environment so the children will continue to emit turtles without the necessity of instant external reward and will encourage him to do turtle all day long, even when the possibility of an immediate reward is non-instant. This is the next step toward helping the child control his own behavior. We will approach this task by changing the reward system and strengthening peer support.

C. Changing reward systems

First, it is important to change the type of reward system. Stop using edibles (candy) as an immediate reward for the turtle response; start using them intermittently and gradually stop using them at all. Continue praise for peer support. The only tangible reward for using the turtle response will now be given once each day. At the end of each day, all the children who have done turtles instead of hitting, teasing or grabbing will be eligible for a small toy, trinket, or special treat. After 2 to 3 days the toys are no longer given to each eligible child. Rather each eligible child is allowed to participate in a lottery to receive these rewards. You should have two or three winners per day. Throughout the day, remind the students of the opportunity to be in the lottery; if someone does an appropriate turtle, announce that he continues to be eligible for the lottery; if someone forgets to do turtle, announce that he won't be eligible for the lottery. Describe the system to the class during turtle practice. Your records of the number of target behaviors is the basis for decisions about who is eligible for the lottery.

D. Strengthening peer support

You want to strengthen peer support. Of course, you already are praising peers for supporting turtle responses. Remind the class several times a day of the importance of peer support. Create games around the theme of peer support. For example, during turtle practice you might reintroduce random provocations and give gold stars to the children who display

enthusiastic support for children doing turtle. You might divide the class into two teams and award stars to the team that shows the most peer support.

Continue generalization training for 1 week. At the end of this period, examine your records of number of target behaviors. By this stage of training, if you have kept accurate records, you should see a decrease in the number of target behaviors.

VIII. Problem Solving

A. Objectives

After reading this section, you should be able to state:

1. The purpose of problem solving;
2. How to start training for problem solving;
3. How to teach children to come up with choices and evaluate consequences of their choices;
4. Several actual problem situations and alternative choices and their consequences for the target behavior of your choice;
5. What to do outside of turtle practice during problem solving;
6. How to teach implementation and verification;
7. Why you can't forget about the Turtle Technique at the conclusion of training;
8. What to do to maintain use of turtle after the completion of training;
9. How to use problem solving with adolescents and adults.

B. Overview

The final and probably the most important state of turtle is problem solving. You have taught your children an alternative response to hitting, teasing, or grabbing, i.e., turtle-relaxation. However, after doing turtle and relaxing themselves, children

still sometimes do not know how to take care of their need appropriately, i.e., the situation still exists, and they may tantrum, tease, or grab. To help children to deal with this difficulty, problem solving techniques are taught during the turtle-practice periods. The problem solving part is a vital part of the program. It should be taught along with the turtle response, relaxation and generalization so that the child will pair the turtle response with making a choice about his behavior.

Problem solving consists of five steps: 1) defining the problem situation very clearly; 2) thinking up choices for dealing with the problem situation; 3) evaluating the consequences of each choice and selecting the best choice; 4) implementing the selected choice; and 5) verifying that the choice selected was the best for that situation. Although this procedure may sound too complicated for young children, in practice these steps blend together in easily understandable ways.

C. Introducing problem solving

You have already laid the groundwork for problem solving training during generalization training by introducing incomplete stories. The basic mode of teaching problem solving is to present a story with a dilemma, which the class is asked to resolve. Do this during turtle practice. First, you define the problem clearly. Use situations that have come up in class. Make up examples of other situations that could come up. Tell the class the examples and make sure they understand the nature of the problem.

After specifying problem situations, continue to steps two and three, which are generating choices and evaluating the consequences of each choice. Do these during turtle practice. If you ask them what the child in the problem story can do, by this point in training most children will immediately yell, "Turtle." Accept this answer, but then ask what choices the child could have after he has done turtle. Question the children until they can suggest alternative courses of action; if they can't supply alternatives, supply them yourself. As each

choice is mentioned, discuss its merits. Consider positive and negative consequences of the choice, so that the children can see the effects of different courses of action. Again, attempt to get the children to supply the consequences; tell the class the consequences only as a last resort. You may want to ask children to role play how they would handle the problem situation to encourage uninhibited expression of alternatives and consequences. After a period of group discussion of alternatives and consequences, try to get the class to arrive at a consensus regarding the best choice for dealing with the problem situation.

We will illustrate this stage of problem solving with an extended example. The teacher describes the following problem situation to her class:

> Michael is pulling a chair across the classroom. He notices that Peter's desk is in the way. If Michael continues to pull his chair across the room, he will bang into Peter's desk. What are Michael's choices?

Class discussion follows:

> Student 1: Michael could pull his chair straight across the room. Tough on Peter.
>
> Teacher: What would happen?
>
> Student 2: Peter would get mad and hit Michael on the head.
>
> Student 3: They would fight.
>
> Student 4: The teacher would yell at them both; they wouldn't get to be in the turtle lottery.
>
> Teacher: What other choices does Michael have?
>
> Student 5: Michael could ask Peter to move.
>
> Student 2: Peter wouldn't move.
>
> Student 1: Then Michael should push Peter out of the way.
>
> Student 6: Michael could move away the empty desk next to Peter and go around Peter.
>
> Student 2: That's too much work.

Student 7: But Michael wouldn't get in trouble.

Teacher: What is the best thing to do, so no one will get in trouble and everyone will be in the lottery?

Student 3: Michael should move around Peter.

Teacher: Right, that way no one will get in trouble. No one will fight. Michael has also been courteous to Peter.

Talk through choices and solutions as illustrated above. Ask the children to act out several solutions to see how they would work out.

Repeat these discussions with many problem situations generated both by you and by the children. As the class becomes able to generate and evaluate choices in the group practice setting, select individual children and ask them to rehearse an entire problem solving sequence aloud to the class. Have the class evaluate their solutions and praise them for adequate solutions.

D. Emphasizing choice

With young children it is especially important to emphasize the concept of choice. You may have to teach them what "choice" means in the context of a social situation. First, choices are spoken by the teacher and then by the child (e.g., the teacher says, "What are your choices? One, you can tell me what Johnny did; two, you can move away and ignore him; three, you can hit him; four, you can ask him to stop. What is your choice?") In this way the child can learn what is meant by a behavioral choice. They can discuss the various alternatives and their respective consequences. They eventually learn to derive their own choices, and the teacher no longer needs to model the response. We have also found that although older children and adults may not have to learn what a behavioral choice is, they often have to be made aware of appropriate alternatives that can now satisfy their needs in the problem situation.

Another useful approach we have used is to ask the questions, "What do you need now, and what is a better way to get it?" For example, John starts screaming because he is having trouble putting blocks together quickly. He stops and does "turtle."

Teacher: "What do you need, John?"

John: "Help with the blocks."

Teacher: "What is a better way to ask for it?"

John: (Raising his hand) "Could you please help me?"

Teacher: "Very good. I'd like to help you when you ask me that way."

This method is mentioned specifically to bring your attention to the needs of the child and teaching him how he can fulfill them appropriately. When working with adults, a similar procedure is used. We train them to be aware of their needs for approval, attention, affection, and to choose a constructive way to fulfill them.

E. Activities outside of turtle practice

Along with the above activities during turtle practice, do the following things during the rest of class time:

1) Continue recording target behavior.
2) Whenever you see a child doing turtle or in a hazardous situation, ask him what his choices are. This is a very important procedure. We have found that constant reminders from the teacher about the "choices" available prompts the children to think before they act impulsively. Praise the children for supplying good choices.
3) Continue random provocations intermittently. When you provoke the child, ask him what "choices" he has.

The final two steps in problem solving, implementation and verification, can only be learned from actual real-life problem situations. As your children do turtle and respond in other ways to real problem situations, point out to them what they did; if they made an effective response such as telling the teacher instead of hitting, praise them and point out how their problem solving was successful. This is most effective if done immediately after the child does turtle. In group practice sessions bring up

particularly successful incidents of problem solving for group praise and discussion.

At this point you have completed turtle training. You are now faced with the question of how to maintain the successful use of the Turtle Technique over a long time period.

IX. Conclusion

A. Maintenance

Long-term maintenance of the Turtle Technique in the classroom requires that the social environment support and reward children for doing turtle; you cannot assume that you can teach turtle and then forget about it without detrimental consequences. There are five procedures to follow to insure continued use of turtle:

1) Continue to record the number of target behaviors. This data will serve to keep you informed about the success of the technique. It will also reward you for your efforts in teaching turtle and serve as useful evidence to show other teachers and administrators.
2) Continue to randomly praise all appropriate turtles you see and occasionally spot-check the nature of a child's problem solving. Encourage children to keep praising each other.
3) Continue the random provocations once or twice each week.
4) Continue to point out choices and praise the appropriate choice.
5) Continue to hold turtle practice once or twice a week. Review the technique at these times and consider any new problem situations.

We cannot overemphasize the importance of these maintenance procedures. If you forget about turtle after teaching it for several weeks, we can assure you that problems will develop.

B. Turtle and self-defense

A word concerning turtle and self-defense is in order now that you have read the manual. If we tell a child that he should do turtle instead of fighting back, in a sense we are teaching him not to defend himself. Depending upon your philosophical conceptualization, you may or may not think this is a good idea. We feel that as a teacher you have the right to set rules for your class and to teach children to follow those rules. You are justified in teaching children not to fight back in class. However, at some point in turtle training, you may want to advise children that there are situations outside of class where fighting back is a more appropriate response than turtle. For example, turtle would obviously be inappropriate during tackle football. If several kids gang up on a child in the street, fighting back may be more appropriate than turtle. Sometimes fighting back is sometimes an appropriate alternative. Keep this issue in mind.

Also, you may want to advise parents about the Turtle Technique so they won't respond negatively to their children if they use turtle at home. At the Point of Woods School, we have found that children do occasionally use the technique at home, even in the absence of encouragement to do so. One child did turtle when his parents fought with each other. Another child told his parents to do turtle instead of arguing!

C. Other applications

This manual is geared to the <u>special</u> classroom rather than the regular classroom. In our recent experience with the program we have found that it is better for a child who is in a regular classroom to be taught the technique in an individual clinical situation. This can be done by either a resource teacher, school psychologist, principal, etc. (during specials time). The clinician would have to modify the technique presented in the manual to suit the needs of the child. I want to stress here that it is very important to maintain the peer-support part of the classroom program in any clinical intervention.

Other clinical applications are not discussed in this manual. They are, however, possible. In these cases the intervention consisted of:

a. A stop response, e.g., "Turtle," "Stop," "Count to 10."
b. Relaxation (Jacobsen).
c. Problem solving (Transactional Analysis and the Shaftel-Shaftel approach have worked well).
d. Peer support (from client's natural environment).

For further information about such applications, check the reference list that follows this section.[3]

D. Problem solving with adolescents and adults

The model of problem solving introduced in the context of the Turtle Technique can also be utilized with adolescents and adults. We want to teach them to approach social problems in five stages: define the problem, generate alternative solutions, decide on the best alternative, implement the selected alternative, and verify the outcome.

Defining the problem includes making a clear statement of the relevant dimension of the situation in specific terms. If a mother is annoyed that her son uses the telephone too much, her definition of the problem might be "You use the phone too much and this bothers me because we can't afford it." Clients have a tendency to state problems in obtuse terms; in the phone example, a typical incorrect statement might have been "You never listen to me when I tell you to get off the phone." If the problem is the phone, this is the issue to be addressed in problem solving, not the more general issue of authority.

Generating alternative solutions includes listing a large number of solutions following four basic principles of creative thinking:

1) Defer judgement--suggest solutions but do not evaluate them until later;
2) Be freewheeling--suggest anything that comes to mind, even the craziest ideas;
3) Combine ideas to come up with new ideas;
4) Use key words to think of variations on ideas, key words such as who, when, where, how much, etc.

[3]Manual on clinical interventions should be out next year.

Decision-making is the most difficult stage of problem solving. Here the client must project the consequences of each alternative, anticipating immediate and delayed consequences, positive and negative consequences, etc. It is usually helpful to write down the information at this stage. After clearly evaluating each alternative, the client looks for the alternative with the most positive and least negative consequences. When two people are involved in the problem solving (parent-child, husband-wife, employer-employee, etc.), there may be no readily available alternative that both can agree to. The dyad can chose to negotiate, starting from the least aversive consequence. Decision-making should culminate in selection of an alternative.

Implementation is clearcut and often not really considered a stage of problem solving. Verification, the final stage is that occasion when the client examines whether the implemented alternative resulted in the projected consequences. If the answer is yes, the problem is solved; if no, the client must return to generation of alternatives and decision-making.

We can teach problem solving to older clients through intensive modeling and role-playing. The therapist presents each stage and demonstrates its application to a hypothetical problem. Then, the clients imitate the therapist role-playing this stage. The therapist gives them feedback, and they try another role-played sequence. As they master each stage, they continue to the next.

This procedure has proven useful for teaching parents and adolescents to resolve conflicts, teaching college students to deal effectively with social and academic pressures, and teaching husbands and wives to resolve maritial conflicts. Refer to the D'Zurilla and Goldfried reference listed below for more information about this topic.

E. A final word

Good luck in your applications of the Turtle Technique. If you would like further information, call the Point of Woods Laboratory School, 516-246-3604, 516-246-3402, and ask for Marlene Schneider or Arthur Robin.

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